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SUBJECT: FINLAND TO SUPPORT U.S. POSITION ON LRIT AT IMO,S
MSC MEETING

REF: SECSTATE 183434

Classified By: Econoff Glenn Lewis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (SBU) Econoff delivered reftel demarche on the International Maritime Organization,s (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee meeting (MSC) to Captain Paavo Wihuri, Director of Maritime Safety at the Finnish Maritime Administration. Captain Wihuri will also be leading the eight person Finnish delegation to the meeting in Turkey.

2. (C) During an EU coordination meeting on October 10, Wihuri said EU member states agreed in principle with the U.S. proposal to have the IMO serve as the interim Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) coordinator. As chair of the EU meeting, Wihuri said the member states were impressed by the U.S. expertise in this area and how well AMVER had functioned. Wihuri commented that he expects China to oppose the proposal and that Russia will likely be neutral. Wihuri was not as familiar with the GMDSS proposal, as it was not raised during the EU coordination meeting.

3. (C) Wihuri said his office was concerned that MSC Vice Chairman Neil Ferrer from the Philippines does not have the "capability" to function as the MSC Chair following the death of Igor Ponomarev. They would likely support the previous Chair Tom Allen from the UK should IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos call for a new Chair.

4. (C) Wihuri said the launching of missiles without warning by North Korea was a clear violation of maritime safety laws; however, he cautioned that the Navigation Safety Sub-Committee should focus on "the issues at hand" and avoid politicizing North Korea,s actions. He said during a previous meeting that Japan, and to a lesser extent the U.S., had taken a strong stance that may have been counterproductive in causing North Korea to change its actions. Wihuri stressed that the issue should be discussed solely on the merits of safety at sea and that the Sub-Committee should work to resolve the issue separately from politics.

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